

Monday, February 27, 2023

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Rabbi Andi Fliegel and I am writing in support of a rent cap and in support of SB 4, An Act Concerning Connecticut's Present and Future Housing Needs.

I am a resident of West Hartford and a rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford, CT. My congregation is a proud member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA).

Deuteronomy 15:8 states, "You shall open your hand wide to [the poor person] and shall surely lend him/her sufficient for his/her need, in which s/he lacks." The Talmud, a central Jewish text, understands this verse to be referring to the poor person's need for a home with a bed and a table. In other words, every person is entitled to habitable and adequate housing to keep them safe and we as a community are obligated to ensure that this is actualized not only for ourselves but all of our community members.

The need for a rent cap is dire. Wages have not kept up with rental prices and renters cannot afford these steep increases. Over the last two decades through the five-year period of 2017-2021, median rents increased in Connecticut nearly twice as much as the income of renters. If adjusted for inflation, the median household income of renters dropped by 13%. Black communities, seniors, and people with disabilities are disproportionately housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their gross monthly income on rent. Most compellingly, a rent cap is what Connecticut residents want. A recent survey showed that 72% of CT residents support a 2.5% rent cap. Rent increases that significantly outpace a 2.5 or 3% rent cap are directly impacting homelessness in our state.

I strongly support a rent cap, but SB 4 would be stronger with the following changes: A rent cap of no more than 3%. Coverage in between tenants, so landlords can't push out tenants to increase rent. Expand good cause eviction protections so tenants have security in their homes and can't be evicted for no reason.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Rabbi Andi Fliegel  
West Hartford, CT